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SOURCES OF THE RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN ARMED CONFLICT

Abstract. The purpose of the research – to reveal the origins of the Russian-Ukrainian armed conflict at the beginning of the XXIst century, its preconditions and circumstances. **The methodology of the research** is based on the principles of historicism, systematics, scientificity, authorial objectivity, as well as the use of general scientific (analysis, synthesis, generalization) and special historical (historical genetic, historical typological, historical systemic) methods. **The scientific novelty** consists in the fact that for the first time in the history of the Russian-Ukrainian relations, based on previously unknown sources, it has been clarified how at the end of the XXth century the political leadership of the Russian Federation laid the foundations for the Russian-Ukrainian armed conflict in 2014. **The Conclusions.** Since 1991, the Russian leadership has effectively inflamed the conflict in some regions, including the Crimea, by “not allowing” Ukraine to be an independent state with the right to European development. At the same time, in order to damage the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine, the Black Sea Fleet was used as the main lever of influence. It should be noted that the impact on the population of the Crimean peninsula, through the prism of events around the Black Sea Fleet, was carried out in many spheres, primarily,

military, political, informational, linguistic, etc. In our opinion, in 1997 the resolution of the issue of the Black Sea Fleet division marked the fact that by this time the majority of the population of the territory of the Crimea had formed a negative attitude towards the Ukrainian authorities and, as a result, towards the Armed Forces of Ukraine. Therefore, the rapid occupation of the Crimean peninsula in 2014 and the events in Donbass were a natural consequence of the unfriendly policy of the Russian political leadership towards Ukraine, which the leadership has been pursuing since 1991.

Key words: Ukraine, the Russian Federation, the Navy, the Black Sea Fleet, the Crimea, armed conflict.

ВИТОКИ РОСІЙСЬКО-УКРАЇНСЬКОГО ЗБРОЙНОГО КОНФЛІКТУ

Анотація. *Мета дослідження* – розкрити витoki російсько-українського збройного конфлікту на початку ХХІ століття, його передумови та обставини. **Методологія дослідження** спирається на принципах історизму, системності, науковості, авторської об'єктивності, а також на використання загальнонаукових (аналіз, синтез, узагальнення) та спеціально-історичних (історико-генетичний, історико-типологічний, історико-системний) методів. **Наукова новизна** полягає у тому, що вперше в історії російсько-українських відносин на основі невідомих раніше джерел з'ясовано яким чином політичне керівництво Російської Федерації наприкінці ХХ століття заклало підвалини для виникнення російсько-українського збройного конфлікту 2014 року. **Висновки:** починаючи з 1991 року російське керівництво ефективно розпалювало конфлікт в окремих регіонах, зокрема в Криму, “не дозволяючи” Україні бути незалежною державою з правом на європейській розвиток. При цьому, з метою завдання шкоди територіальній цілісності і суверенітету України як основний важіль впливу був використаний Чорноморський флот. Зазначимо, що вплив на населення Кримського півострову крізь призму подій навколо Чорноморського флоту здійснювався у багатьох сферах, насамперед воєнній, політичній, інформаційній, мовній тощо. Вирішення питання навколо розподілу Чорноморського флоту в 1997 році, на наш погляд, ознаменувало те, що к цьому моменту у більшості населення території Криму було сформовано негативне ставлення до української влади та, як слід, до Збройних Сил України. Тому, швидка окупація Кримського півострова в 2014 році та події на Донбасі стали закономірним наслідком недружньої політики російського політичного керівництва по відношенню до України, яку воно здійснювало починаючи із 1991 року.

Ключові слова: Україна, Російська Федерація, Військово-Морські Сили, Чорноморський флот, Крим, збройний конфлікт

The Problem Statement. Nowadays, there is no doubt that the Russian-Ukrainian armed conflict is the result of a long hybrid war of the Russian Federation against Ukraine since August 1991. After the proclamation of Ukraine's independence, the Russian political leadership understood that the Ukrainian society did not want to return to the orbit of the Russian Federation, but sought to rebuild its state on a democratic basis (Tsviliuk & Kutuzova, 2009, p. 209). Of course, this was a challenge not only to the leaders of the imperial ambitions. Sovereign Ukraine questioned the existence of the entire political system of the Russian state (Seheda & Shevchuk, 2019, p. 1).

It was at that time, when the work began on the gradual destruction of Ukraine as an independent state, which led to an open Russian-Ukrainian conflict in 2014. Inflation of this conflict began to be carried out against the background of acute problems of division of the Black Sea Fleet in the Crimea (Fedorovykh, 2007).

The objective of the research is to elucidate the methods of a hybrid war conducting and to prevent further actions of the aggressor country aimed at destroying the sovereignty and independence of Ukraine.

The Analysis of Recent Researches and Publications. A significant number of scientific works, including the works of modern historians, in particular, O. Boyko, S. Kulchytsky,

M. Doroshko and the others, are devoted to the problem of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict in 2014. The intensification of the study of the causes of the Russian-Ukrainian armed conflict is, of course, connected with the attempt to find the ways to overcome the conflict. However, in our opinion, among the publications on the emergence of modern local wars and armed conflicts, very little attention is paid to the circumstances and preconditions for their occurrence. Even domestic authors sometimes ignore these issues.

The purpose of the article is elucidation and analysis of the causes and circumstances of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict in 2014 with a further identification of the ways to counter the aggressive intentions of the anti-Ukrainian forces.

The Basic Material Statement. Undeclared wars, such as the one begun by Russia against Ukraine in 2014, are usually described as hybrid by modern researchers and are qualified as a supposedly new phenomenon in the history of wars. However, in our opinion, the undeclared war for the destruction of the Ukrainian statehood began on August 24, 1991, when Ukraine's independence was declared (Postanova, 1991). According to the plan of the Russian political leadership after the collapse of the USSR and the proclamation of the Russian Federation as its successor, the Soviet republics, as supposedly sovereign states, were to unite in the Union of Independent States headed by Moscow leadership.

However, the desire of the population of Ukraine to get rid of Moscow control contradicted the plans of Boris Yeltsin and his team, which was later confirmed by the results of the All-Ukrainian referendum, when more than 90% of its participants supported the Declaration of Independence of Ukraine (Adamovych, 2009, p. 16).

Therefore, in order to prevent Ukraine's withdrawal from the orbit of the Russian political leadership influence, on August 26, 1991, P. Voshchanov, the press secretary of the President of the Russian Federation, issued an official statement containing an open threat to the neighbouring states, including Ukraine. It was stated, in particular, that in case of the republics termination of allied relations with Russia, the Russian Federation "reserves the right to raise the issue of border revision". P. Voshchanov explained that the statement mainly concerns the Crimea, Donbass and North Kazakhstan, where there are a significant number of the Russians. If these republics withdraw from the alliance with Russia, then "we must take care of the population living there, and we must not forget that these lands were developed by the Russians. Russia is unlikely to agree to give them away so easily" (Illarionov, 2011). Later, this verbal threat by P. Voshchanov was practically realized in 2014 in the Ukrainian Crimea and Donbass.

The next day, in the speech by the President of the Russian Federation Boris Yeltsin, the claims were made to own the Black Sea Fleet and territorial allegations against Ukraine were formulated. They soon grew into a persistent problem in the Ukrainian-Russian relations.

However, at night on 7 – 8 December of 1991, near Bilovezka Pushcha (the village of Viskuli, Bilorus) the heads of governments of the three allied republics: S. Shushkevich and V. Kebich, the representatives of the Republic Belarus, and B. Yeltsin and G. Burbulis from the Russian Federation, L. Kravchuk and V. Fokin from Ukraine announced the termination of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (hereinafter – the USSR) and signed the Agreement on the Commonwealth of Independent States (hereinafter – the CIS), which finally ceased the existence of the USSR (Smolii, 2016, p. 137).

The Agreement, which Ukraine ratified with reservations, came into force on December 10, 1991 (Central State Archive of the highest authorities and administration of Ukraine – CSAHAU, f. 1, d. 16, c. 4636, pp. 57–58). In the Agreement, in particular, it was determined that "*the member states of the Commonwealth will maintain under a joint*

command the common military strategic space, including unified control of nuclear weapons, ... jointly guarantee the necessary conditions for the location, operation, material and social security of strategic armed forces" (CSAHAAU, f. 1, d. 16, c. 4636, pp. 57–58). However, in this document the implementation mechanism was not set out, as the CIS political leadership did not have a common understanding of what should be considered under the term "strategic armed forces", as well as their status, conditions of deployment and provision at the territory of sovereign states. Of course, this made it possible to use the Provisions of the Agreement in one's own political interests (Fedorovykh, 2007).

On December 30, 1991, at the meeting of the CIS heads of the states in Minsk, there was confirmed the legal right of each member state to establish its own armed forces (Chernenko, 1992, p. 1). As a result, the objects of the Soviet Union subordination located at the territory of Ukraine became its state property. All members of the Commonwealth, without any exception, legally acknowledged that Ukraine would exercise this right without any conditions from January 3, 1992 (Chernenko, 1992, p. 1). All this was confirmed in Art. 2 of the Agreement of the Council of Heads of State of the Commonwealth of Independent States "On the Armed Forces and Border Troops" (Uhoda, 1991). It was agreed that the Joint Command of the Strategic Restraint Forces would include only those military formations that would be determined by each state on a special list specified in a separate protocol. Keeping to the Provisions of these agreements, during the negotiations on January 2–3, 1992 in Kyiv, Ukraine proposed a substantiated list of formations, units and establishments to be included into the strategic forces for the period until the export of nuclear weapons from Ukraine, i.e., by the end of 1994 (Savchenko, 1997, pp. 12–13).

Another result of this meeting was that on January 3, 1992, the troops stationed at the Ukrainian territory were to begin taking a voluntary oath of allegiance to the people of Ukraine (Danilov, 2000, p. 69). It should be emphasized that on November 22, 1991, the Minister of Defense of Ukraine, Colonel-General K. Morozov, in an article "Being with the People at a Crucial Period in its History" published in "The Narodna Armiya" newspaper, openly stated that the Ukrainian Navy would be formed on the basis of a part of the Black Sea Fleet of the former USSR, based on the territory of Ukraine. The Minister of Defense of Ukraine also explained in detail the mechanism of servicemen transfer to the Armed Forces of Ukraine (Pokotylo, 2011, pp. 733–735). At the same time, in the newspaper there were explained in detail the provisions of the adopted laws on guarantees of the rights and freedoms of servicemen. It should be noted that this article was also reprinted by the newspaper of the Black Sea Fleet "Flag of the Motherland" (Danilov, 2000, p. 65).

In this context, something needs to be clarified. The fact is that after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Ukraine inherited about 2 000 strategic and up to 4 200 tactical nuclear warheads, as well as 176 intercontinental ballistic missiles and 40 strategic bombers as nuclear weapons carriers (Shama, 2018). At the same time, a significant part of the bombers belonged to the aviation of the Black Sea Fleet, which made it a powerful lever of influence not so much militarily but politically.

Despite this, very little attention was paid to the issue of subordination of the Black Sea Fleet, primarily, because there was a struggle for power in Ukraine and Russia during this period. In fact, the leaders of both countries ignored the importance of resolving the naval issue. For instance, the Ukrainian leadership did not arrive in Sevastopol, hoping that the subordination of the Black Sea Fleet to the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine would take place by itself, even the commander of the Ukrainian fleet was not appointed (Danilov, 2000, pp. 69–70). At the same time, the Russian

authorities did not need the Black Sea Fleet at all. Thus, according to the commander of the Black Sea Fleet, Admiral I. Kasatonov "...*The situation really looked strange. Moscow was stubbornly silent, although both the Ministry of Defense and the General Staff were well aware of the pressure of the independent government on us (Ukraine – the author's note). Instead of a clear order, abstract words of support were received*" (Nordvik, 2015).

As the subsequent events showed, the extremely favourable moment for the establishment of the Ukrainian Navy was not used. As a result, the policy of the Black Sea Fleet Command changed to the opposite, as the superficial attitude to the naval problem and the delay in its solution by the leadership and the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine was recognized as their weakness. Russia began a political pressure on Ukraine to reach a favourable decision on the Black Sea Fleet as a ownership guarantor of the Crimean peninsula (Mamchak, 2007, p. 201).

However, despite the negative processes, on January 3, 1992, the troops stationed at the territory of Ukraine, in addition to the troops that were the part of the Strategic forces, began to take a voluntary oath of allegiance to the people of Ukraine. The corresponding cipher telegramme of the Minister of Defense of Ukraine with instructions on the beginning of taking the oath was sent on December 31, 1991 (Kuz'muk, 2001, p. 279). But if everything was clarified and fully predicted concerning taking the oath in the army units at the territory of Ukraine, for definite reasons the situation was quite uncertain in the Black Sea Fleet.

Thus, on January 4, 1992, the commander of the Black Sea Fleet, Admiral I. Kasatonov, without the consent of the Ukrainian leadership, voluntarily declared that the Black Sea Fleet was Russian and would be only subordinate to the USSR Minister of Defense Marshal E. Shaposhnikov and the Commander-in-Chief of the USSR Navy – Admiral V. Chernavin, Deputy Minister of Defense (Kasatonov, 2015). The next day, at the meeting of the Naval Military Council chaired by Admiral I. Kasatonov, it was decided not to take the oath until the agreement was reached between Ukraine and Russia on the ownership of the Black Sea Fleet (Savchenko, 1997, p. 19).

I. Kasatonov himself recalls the events of that time: "... *I made my own decision (concerning the Black Sea Fleet – the author's note)... and announced that the Black Sea Fleet is Russian and subordinates exclusively to the President of Russia and Marshal of Aviation Yevgeny Shaposhnikov, Commander-in-Chief of the Joint Forces of the CIS. At the same time, I forbade taking the Ukrainian military oath on ship boards and in naval units* (Kozak, 2019).

At the same time, the commander of the Black Sea Fleet began to organize personally taking the CIS oath and openly opposed the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine. All his activities were aimed at changing the public opinion in the locations of the fleet, the military units and the navy to make servicemen give up the desire to serve the Ukrainian people. For instance, for the publication in the naval newspaper "The Flag of the Motherland" (January 10, 1992) of L. Kravchuk's address, the President of Ukraine to the personnel of the navy on taking a military oath of allegiance to the people of Ukraine, Admiral I. Kasatonov fired the editor of the newspaper, Captain of Rank 1, Ya. Kniazev in reserve (Mamchak, 2007, pp. 203–204).

Admiral I. Kasatonov's anti-Ukrainian position determined the ideology of the Russian Federation's confrontation with Ukraine against the background of the Black Sea Fleet problems. The main idea was the following: since the Fleet was based in Georgia, Russia and Ukraine, it was strategic and should report to the command of the CIS Navy, i.e., the Navy of the Russian Federation. In this case, representatives of the non-strategic Ministry of Defense of Ukraine would be prohibited from visiting the strategic Black Sea Fleet. In addition, the laws of Ukraine and orders of the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine did not concern the Black Sea Fleet.

In Ukraine, meanwhile, priority steps were taken to build up the Ukrainian army. Thus, on January 9, 1992, at the first All-Ukrainian Conference on Military Construction, held in Kyiv, there were formulated the urgent tasks of reforming the Armed Forces of Ukraine. The meeting was chaired by L. Kravchuk, the President of Ukraine – Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Ukraine in the presence of I. Pliushch, the Chairman of the Verkhovna Rada and V. Fokin, the Prime Minister of Ukraine.

However, the Ministry of Defense did not take decisive action to establish the Ukrainian Navy. In addition, on January 11, 1992 in Kyiv during the negotiations of the Ukrainian and Russian state delegations on the military political issues, the Ukrainian side stated that it planned to form the future Ukrainian Navy only based on the part of the Black Sea Fleet. This decision was confirmed on January 16, 1992 during the meeting of the CIS heads of the states in Moscow (Kolotilova, 2001, pp. 41–42). Thus, the negotiations on the status of the Black Sea Fleet reached the interstate level: the issue of its division between Ukraine and Russia arose.

The resolution of the Verkhovna Rada of Russia of May 21, 1992 strengthened significantly and turned the naval propaganda into an outspoken anti-Ukrainian political campaign in Sevastopol and the Crimea. “On the Legal Assessment of the Highest State Authorities of the RSFSR to Change the Status of the Crimea, Adopted in 1954” (CSAHAAU, f. 5233, d. 1, c. 13, p. 41).

The Black Sea Fleet Command also resorted to provocations. Thus, on January 28, 1992, under the legend of preparations for the 300th anniversary of the Russian Fleet, the cruiser “Moscow” and the patrol ship “Immaculate” were sent from Sevastopol to Novorossiysk. On board of the cruiser, the command and the Military Council of the Navy met with Boris Yeltsin, the Russian President and Marshal E. Shaposhnikov, the Commander-in-Chief of the United CIS Armed Forces. During the meeting, Boris Yeltsin stated that he opposed the idea of the division of the Fleet. Not only the legislative authority but the leaders of Russia openly supported the commander of the Black Sea Fleet, Admiral I. Kasatonov, who kept to the idea of the united Fleet (Mamchak, 2007, p. 205; Savchenko, 1997, pp. 25–26).

Subsequently, on February 6, 1992, the Verkhovna Rada of Russia adopted the resolution “On Continuing Work on Studying the Legal Validity of Decisions of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR of February 19, 1954 and the Supreme Soviet of the USSR of April 26, 1954 on Withdrawal of the Crimean Region from the RSFSR” (Postanovlenie, 1992) and the resolution “On the Unity of the Red Banner Black Sea Fleet”, which, in particular, stated: “*Having considered the situation around the Red Banner Black Sea Fleet as a result of unilateral actions of the leadership of the Ukrainian Republic, the Verkhovna Rada of the Russian Federation resolves: the Government of the Russian Federation take all necessary measures to preserve the Red Banner Black Sea Fleet, which protects the interests of all CIS member states in the Mediterranean in accordance with the Agreement on the establishment of the Commonwealth of Independent States of December 8, 1991* (Postanovlenie, 1992a).

Thus, military sailors were involved into the political struggle, and the political leadership of the Russian Federation with the help of the navy continued planning to control the entire Black Sea coast of the Ukrainian state from Odesa to Kerch. Of course, the goal of the Russian leadership was to return gradually the whole territory of Ukraine to its sphere of influence, even by force. This is indirectly confirmed by the memoirs of Admiral I. Kasatonov: “*Mere defense is not my tactic. I received the blessing of Patriarch Oleksiy II so that the fleet would continue to be Russian. I initiated the adoption of the Act of State Independence of the Republic of Crimea by the Crimean Parliament... If Moscow had put pressure a little, demonstrating political will, the Crimea could have belonged to Russia in 1992...*” (Kasatonov, 2015).

At that time, the separatist movement intensified in the Crimea and Sevastopol. Decrees of the President of Ukraine and Resolutions of the Verkhovna Rada were sabotaged. The Soviet flags hang over the official institutions of the Crimea. The pro-Russian paramilitary organizations of the “Cossacks” (repeatedly appealed to the officers of the 126th Motorized Rifle Horlivka Division for weapons) functioned openly. The “military patriotic clubs” functioned openly as well. There were cases of beatings of the local Ukrainian organizations activists by supporters of the “independence” of the Crimea. There was abuse of the state Ukrainian symbols, etc. (UNSO, 2018).

At that time, in the Crimea the most radical pro-Russian political parties and public organizations were: the Communist Party of Ukraine, led by L. Hrach; Sevastopol organization of the Russian Patriotic Assembly, which was later renamed into the Russian People’s Chamber of Sevastopol, headed by O. Kruglov and R. Telyatnikova; the Republican Movement of the Crimea, led by a lawyer Yu. Meshkov; the Russian Party, led by S. Shuvainikov and the Republican Party of the Crimea, led by V. Mezhak. As the result of their activity, in the information environment, a negative public opinion was spread about forced Ukrainization, about the Ukrainian statehood, as hostile to Russia, and etc. At the same time, the Ukrainian press was not sent to Sevastopol for almost six months. Strengthening of the information blockade and ideological campaign against Ukraine, which, with the silent observation by local authorities, began to take provocative forms: humiliating anti-Ukrainian inscriptions loomed everywhere; not only at rallies, but also in the press the calls to arm against the People’s Movement of Ukraine were published (Mamchak, 2007, p. 212).

In the spring of 1992, in particular, from March 24 till April 9, the relations between Ukraine and Russia deteriorated considerably because of the issue of the Black Sea Fleet and entered an active phase of confrontation at both political and military levels. Thus, on April 1, 1992, the Commander-in-Chief of the CIS Navy, Admiral V. Chernavin, arrived in Sevastopol. Under his leadership, the Black Sea Fleet’s actions continued against Ukraine’s course to create its own fleet. Under Admiral V. Chernavin leadership the activities in Sevastopol were held with the participation of O. Rutskey, the Russian Vice President. The representative of the President of Ukraine in Sevastopol I. Yermakov wasn’t reported on the participation of O. Rutskey in the activities in Sevastopol. The governmental parliamentary delegation of Ukraine headed by B. Sharikov, the Assistant to the President of Ukraine for Military Affairs, Lieutenant General, was simply ignored (Mamchak, 2007, p. 212).

As it turned out, the arrival of O. Rutskey in Sevastopol on April 3 of the same year and some excitement of the high command of the Black Sea Fleet around his arrival was necessary to gain public support of the Russian President Boris Yeltsin’s statement, which was made the same day: *“In case of any attempt to unilaterally change the status of the Black Sea Fleet, the Russian Federation will be forced to take the fleet under its jurisdiction”* (Mamchak, 2007, p. 213). O. Rutskey stated that the Black Sea Fleet *“was Russian, it will remain Russian”* (Mamchak, 2007, p. 89), *“the Act of transfer of the Crimea to Ukraine in 1954 is not a document” and further he sees the Crimea as the part of Russia* (CSAHAAU, f. 1, d. 16, c. 4742, p. 171).

On April 5, 1992, L. Krachuk, the President of Ukraine, being aware of the threat of subordination of the Black Sea Fleet to Russia, summoned an extraordinary meeting of the National Security Council of Ukraine. The result of the meeting was the historic Decree of the President of Ukraine № 209/92 “On Urgent Measures for the Formation of the Armed Forces of Ukraine”, the second paragraph of which clearly states: *“To form the Naval Forces of Ukraine on the basis of the Black Sea Fleet forces stationed at the territory of Ukraine. The Ministry of Defense of Ukraine to start forming the governing bodies of the Naval Forces*

of Ukraine, making agreement with the Commander-in-Chief of the United Forces of the Commonwealth on the list of ships and units of the Black Sea Fleet, which are temporarily transferred to the operational subordination to the command of the Strategic Forces of the Commonwealth” (CSAHAAU, f. 5233, d. 1, c. 42, pp. 175–176).

It should be added that the final issue regarding the division of the Black Sea Fleet of the former Soviet Union was determined on May 28, 1997 in the Agreement between Ukraine and the Russian Federation, according to which the Black Sea Fleet was distributed in the ratio of 81,7% to Russia and 18,3 % – to Ukraine. According to the official data, the division of the Black Sea Fleet was finally completed in the second half of 1997 (Pokotylo, 2011, p. 734). However, it can be stated that in 1997 the issue of the division of the Black Sea Fleet was completed, while the political issue of returning Ukraine to the sphere of influence of the Russian Federation, on the contrary, only began. Whereas during 1991 – 1997, with the assistance of the Russian political leadership, the majority of the population of the territory of the Crimea developed a negative attitude towards the Ukrainian authorities and, as it should be, towards the Armed Forces of Ukraine, at the same time, the Black Sea Fleet of the Russian Federation had respect and moral support among the population, even many years later. All these factors contributed to the rapid occupation of the Crimea in 2014.

The Conclusions. Having analyzed the documents of that period thoroughly, the authors came to the following conclusions:

firstly, since 1991, the political leadership of the Russian Federation has begun covert activities to return Ukraine to its sphere of influence;

secondly, in order to damage the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine, the Black Sea Fleet was used as the main lever of influence;

thirdly, the influence on the population of the Crimean peninsula through the prism of events concerning the Black Sea Fleet was carried out in many spheres, primarily, military, political, informational, linguistic, etc., which contributed to the occupation of the Crimea in 2014.

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